

**To:** Strauss, Alexis[Strauss.Alexis@epa.gov]  
**Cc:** Torres, Tomas[Torres.Tomas@epa.gov]; Montgomery, Michael[Montgomery.Michael@epa.gov]  
**From:** Albright, David  
**Sent:** Wed 5/11/2016 4:08:22 PM  
**Subject:** RE: response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

It looks like they captured CA-specific info. For example the industry rep who requested consideration of a "non-endangerment" standard is Macpherson Oil, a CA operator. I don't see anything I would add from a CA perspective.

**From:** Strauss, Alexis  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 11, 2016 9:01 AM  
**To:** Albright, David <Albright.David@epa.gov>  
**Cc:** Torres, Tomas <Torres.Tomas@epa.gov>; Montgomery, Michael <Montgomery.Michael@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** FW: response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Anything CA specific, per Ed?

**From:** Walsh, Ed  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2016 2:42 PM  
**To:** Strauss, Alexis <Strauss.Alexis@epa.gov>  
**Subject:** Fwd: response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Alexis. Here is what I got from Ow. Is there anything you want is to be aware of --California specific ?

Thanks

Ed

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Spraul, Greg" <Spraul.Greg@epa.gov>

**Date:** May 10, 2016 at 4:47:37 PM EDT

**To:** "Walsh, Ed" <Walsh.Ed@epa.gov>

**Cc:** "Fontaine, Tim" <Fontaine.Tim@epa.gov>

**Subject:** Re: response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Here are our responses:

**1. Bullet #2 indicates that some of the recommended procedures have been revised, and some are in the works. Do we know what those are? Are those public or published somewhere? And what is the process for revisions? Do those have a public comment period?**

*In July 2014, EPA Office of Ground Water and Drinking Water issued a memorandum to the EPA Regional Water Division Directors to help promote a consistent, predictable process for the review of aquifer exemption requests under the Safe Drinking Water Act. It is located at: <https://www.epa.gov/uic/enhancing-coordination-and-communication-states-review-and-approval-aquifer-exemption-requests>. This was a memo clarifying EPA review procedures; we received input from several state co-regulators, but we did not put out the memo for public comment. We are developing additional technical information to help inform the aquifer exemption review process, which states requested following this memo.*

**2. Bullet #3 indicates that States, environmental groups, and industry have asked EPA to consider revisions. Who has requested revisions and what revisions have they asked for?**

*Both states and the uranium industry have asked for clarity and consistency on the aquifer exemption review and approval process; another industry representative requested that EPA do a rulemaking to allow Class II enhanced oil recovery permit applicants to demonstrate "non-endangerment" of underground sources of drinking water instead of applying for an aquifer exemption; and environmental groups (Natural Resources Defense Council, Clean Water Action, Powder River Basin Resource Council and New Mexico Environmental Law Center) in their recent petition have requested that EPA repeal or amend the agency's aquifer exemption regulations to better protect current and future sources of drinking water.*

**3. We are aware that NRDC has filed a petition. I'm not well versed in this area, but I'm sure there's a formal process for reviewing those -- what is the process and timeline for consideration of such requests? What is EPA's view of the request?**

*There is no statutory timeframe for consideration of petition requests. EPA is in the initial stage of reviewing the petition and will provide a response as soon as all the facts and allegations have been evaluated.*

On May 10, 2016, at 1:58 PM, Walsh, Ed <[Walsh.Ed@epa.gov](mailto:Walsh.Ed@epa.gov)> wrote:

Just got this follow up from Jason on Exempt Aquifers

**From:** Gray, Jason [<mailto:Jason.Gray@mail.house.gov>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, May 10, 2016 1:57 PM  
**To:** Walsh, Ed <[Walsh.Ed@epa.gov](mailto:Walsh.Ed@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** RE: response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Thanks Ed. A few follow-up questions for my understanding and background:

1. Bullet #2 indicates that some of the recommended procedures have been revised, and some are in the works. Do we know what those are? Are those public or published somewhere? And what is the process for revisions? Do those have a public comment period?
2. Bullet #3 indicates that States, environmental groups, and industry have asked EPA to consider revisions. Who has requested revisions and what revisions have they asked for?
3. We are aware that NRDC has filed a petition. I'm not well versed in this area, but I'm sure there's a formal process for reviewing those -- what is the process and timeline for consideration of such requests? What is EPA's view of the request?

Thanks,

Jason

**From:** Walsh, Ed [<mailto:Walsh.Ed@epa.gov>]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 05, 2016 3:06 PM  
**To:** Gray, Jason <[Jason.Gray@mail.house.gov](mailto:Jason.Gray@mail.house.gov)>  
**Subject:** Fwd: response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Here is the answer to the exempt aquifer.

Thanks

Ed

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Spraul, Greg" <[Spraul.Greg@epa.gov](mailto:Spraul.Greg@epa.gov)>  
**Date:** May 5, 2016 at 2:44:28 PM EDT  
**To:** "Walsh, Ed" <[Walsh.Ed@epa.gov](mailto:Walsh.Ed@epa.gov)>  
**Cc:** "Strauss, Alexis" <[Strauss.Alexis@epa.gov](mailto:Strauss.Alexis@epa.gov)>, "Maier, Brent" <[Maier.Brent@epa.gov](mailto:Maier.Brent@epa.gov)>, "Osborne, Howard" <[Osborne.Howard@epa.gov](mailto:Osborne.Howard@epa.gov)>, "Bloom, David" <[Bloom.David@epa.gov](mailto:Bloom.David@epa.gov)>, "Fontaine, Tim" <[Fontaine.Tim@epa.gov](mailto:Fontaine.Tim@epa.gov)>, "Blizzard, James" <[Blizzard.James@epa.gov](mailto:Blizzard.James@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** response - Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Ed,

We worked with our HQ and regional offices on the attached response to the request from HAC.

Greg Spraul

Acting Associate Director

Resource Management Staff

Office of Water

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Email: [spraul.greg@epa.gov](mailto:spraul.greg@epa.gov)

Direct:(202) 564-0255

**From:** Walsh, Ed

**Sent:** Wednesday, April 27, 2016 3:22 PM

**To:** Strauss, Alexis <[Strauss.Alexis@epa.gov](mailto:Strauss.Alexis@epa.gov)>; Maier, Brent  
<[Maier.Brent@epa.gov](mailto:Maier.Brent@epa.gov)>; Blizzard, James <[Blizzard.James@epa.gov](mailto:Blizzard.James@epa.gov)>; Fontaine,  
Tim <[Fontaine.Tim@epa.gov](mailto:Fontaine.Tim@epa.gov)>

**Cc:** Bloom, David <[Bloom.David@epa.gov](mailto:Bloom.David@epa.gov)>; Osborne, Howard  
<[Osborne.Howard@epa.gov](mailto:Osborne.Howard@epa.gov)>

**Subject:** FW: Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Alexis, Brent

Just got this request from Jason on the CA exempt aquifer issue. Looks like he is floating some language he was asked to consider

Also circling in Tim in OW and Jim in OCIR. I think the best way to answer this type of question is to do a one pager like the senate has asked for in their "capabilities drill". Happy to send you format etc....

Thanks

Ed

**From:** Gray, Jason [<mailto:Jason.Gray@mail.house.gov>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 27, 2016 2:33 PM  
**To:** Walsh, Ed <[Walsh.Ed@epa.gov](mailto:Walsh.Ed@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Technical assistance request -- exempt aquifers

Hi Ed – We have been asked to consider some language regarding the ongoing exempt aquifer issue in California. The language, as I understand it, seeks to reaffirm the process and criteria EPA has outlined in its guidance documents as I gather there may be some outside pressure to deviate from that. Could you share with the experts and provide feedback? Thank you

Jason

**Bill Language:**

*The Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency shall work within the existing criteria and procedures for aquifer exemptions in the Underground Injection Control regulatory framework, in a collaborative manner with the States and regulated industries, to promptly review and make decisions on all aquifer exemption applications using the criteria for exempted aquifers set forth in 40 CFR 146.4 (as in effect on April 1, 2016). Consistent with EPA's Guidance for Review and Approval of State UIC Programs and Revisions to Approved State Programs, GWPB Guidance #34, the Administrator shall not use substantial program revisions for purposes of reviewing and making decisions on aquifer exemption applications involving underground injection authorized by permit, provided the injection is occurring into aquifers that meet the criteria for an exemption set forth in 40 CFR 146.4 and the recommendations of key State resource agencies are taken in account.*

**Report Language:**

Exempt Aquifers.- Existing criteria and procedures for aquifer exemptions under EPA Underground Injection Control (UIC) regulations for all classes of injection wells are sufficiently flexible to address new and changed circumstances, including the development of significant new information regarding what can or cannot reasonably be expected to serve as a source of drinking water. The Committee believes amendment to these criteria is not necessary or warranted. EPA is directed to work within the existing UIC regulatory framework, in a collaborative manner with the States, and the energy producing industry, and all other stakeholders that rely on UIC operations, to promptly review and process all aquifer exemption applications submitted to the Agency, including applications for Class II injection by permit, to ensure robust oil and natural gas production in the States as well as robust economic development. Consistent with EPA's Guidance for Review and Approval of State UIC Programs and Revisions to Approved State Programs, GWPB Guidance #34, substantial program revisions are not to be used for purposes of processing aquifer exemption applications involving Class II injection authorized by permit, provided the injection is occurring into aquifers that meet the criteria for an exemption set forth in 40 CFR 146.4 (as in effect on April 1, 2016), and the recommendations of key State resource agencies are taken in account.